

via pacis

Newsletter of the Des Moines Catholic Worker Community

Volume 20, Number 1

Winter 96



It is impossible for any culture to be sound and healthy without a proper respect and regard for the soil, no matter how many urban dwellers think that their food comes from grocery stores and delicatessens or their milk from tins. This ignorance does not release them from a final dependence on the farm.

Peter Maurin

A Rural Reality

by Beth Preheim

Several weeks ago I spent two hours at "the homeplace," the farm my great grandpa Preheim started in the 1870's. I ran around a corral waving my arms at a bunch of cattle, chasing out the cows and keeping in the calves. Michael, my husband, and I ran behind the cows guiding them through the gate.

My cousin, Lyle, stood near the gate with a broom handle which he used to tap the calves on the nose if they tried to get through the gate. My great Uncle, Otto, (still farming at age 86) controlled the gate, making sure the cows didn't get back in the corral. And thus the calves were weaned from their mothers.

All this work resulted in payment of several bags of corn. In exchange for our work we fill bags with field corn from Lyle's grain bin. We use it in our corn burning furnace which cranks out heat to keep our old farmhouse warm.

My husband and I have a "farm," Rose Hill Farm, in the Catholic Worker tradition. While we don't formally call ourselves a Catholic Worker, as graduates of several urban and rural Catholic Workers, we follow the model.

From the beginning, the Catholic Worker movement had both a rural and urban component. Many know of Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day's beautiful articulation of the vision for urban hospitality. Not as many people are aware of what Peter called the "Agronomic University," the rural Catholic Worker where scholars could learn to be workers and workers could learn to be scholars.

Peter Maurin spoke about Catholic Workers promoting cult, culture and cultivation; cult - a spiritual base; culture - the building of communities; and cultivation - care of the land. The art of cultivation is broader than just the growing of food. It is stewardship of creation.

Richard Cleaver, a former Des Moines Catholic Worker,

wrote about this broader mission of Catholic Worker cultivation in *New Heaven, New Earth: Practical Essays on the Catholic Worker Program*. He states:

"Many people over the years have dismissed Peter Maurin's concern for cultivation as a naive, romantic yearning for some past agrarian dreamland. Many others tell us that we will never get everybody out of the cities so we'd be better off not wasting time setting up farm communes. We are convinced that even city dwellers must come to an awareness of their dependence on the rest of Creation for food, clothing

virtually devoid of any practical skills of living. Not much of my seventeen years in school prepared me to live a sustainable lifestyle. I didn't learn that I could set up a bin of worms which would turn my kitchen scraps into compost. I didn't learn how to search for wild asparagus, how to bid at a country auction, how to wallpaper, fix up the house or grow green beans.

The tasks of the "simple life" keep us busy most of the day. Those who venture into the country seeking a life of ease are soon sent packing. Now that I have added cattle chasing to my growing list of

Nature's Unruly Mob, by Wisconsin farmer Paul Gilk. He nicely articulates the struggle for culture:

"A culture is strong to the extent that people actually create and actively maintain it. Like all good farming, art and craft is always done 'by hand'. Culture takes time, patience and commitment.... Since stable culture is created only slowly, the speeding up of time and the quickening of the industrial economy lead inevitably to a thin and brittle culture. As Masanobu Fukuoka (author of *The One Straw Revolution*) says, 'True culture is born within nature and is simple, humble and pure. Lacking true culture, humanity will perish.' Nothing is more urgent than that we learn quickly how to slow down."

Many who write about the social, economic and political problems of our thin and brittle culture promote solutions through federal legislation or institutional programs. They suggest that we just have to send a check for charity and let others do the work. They allow us to bask in an occasional moment of optimism that if we just pass a law it will be better. Ironically, they would tell us that the Catholic Worker way is sentimental, small and irrelevant.

I believe differently. The principles of the Catholic Worker are appealing to me because they can be practiced by any household. Go ahead, declare yourself a Catholic Worker, not necessarily in a formal sense, but in a personal way. A Catholic Worker responds personally to those in need, practices hospitality and develops community, a connection with others and the earth. A Catholic Worker seeks downward mobility, living on less so others can have more. I chose the personal response to people and to the land because it is the dynamic and powerful tool we use to change the world.

Beth Preheim has lived in rural South Dakota for the past six years. Prior to that she lived at several Catholic Workers throughout the Midwest.



Ade Bethune

and shelter and of the effects their way of life has on that Creation."

I see rural Catholic Workers as providing another crucial role in the world, one of developing models of living that promote quality of life based on justice. If justice were to reign down upon us all how should we then live? It's a good idea to practice ahead of time so that we know how to behave when all the good activists put themselves out of business. If we try to live as if the world were just we become a part of the magic of making it happen.

In a just world, people would have meaningful work and our lifestyle and consumption would be attainable by all and sustainable by the planet.

When I first moved "to the country" I knew that I was

life skills, I move further away from the specialization which was fostered so long in my formal education.

Rural Catholic Workers put vision into practice by developing models for economic sustainability. They lean towards barter, cottage industries, self-sustaining activities and part-time jobs. Donations are appreciated, but do not come pouring in.

On our ten acre farm we rely on all of the above to keep going. We have a book publishing company as our cottage industry. I work part-time as a nurse and we barter, garden and beg donations for our peace and justice work. We make attempts at developing culture through homemade art, music and crafts.

I've recently been reading a book about rural culture,



Great News!

We are pleased to announce a new Catholic Worker House in Dubuque, Iowa at 1592 Locust St.



We wish them great success and encourage our friends to pray for them on their journey.

Please join us for
Friday Evening Liturgy

7:30 p.m.

Dingman House 1310 - 7th St.

Come celebrate the Eucharist and spend time with friends.



Everyone is welcome!

via pacis

Newsletter of the
Des Moines Catholic Worker Community

Bishop Dingman House
1310 - 7th St. (515) 243-0765

Msgr. Ligutti House
1301 - 8th St. (515) 246-9887

Lazarus House
1317 - 8th St. (515) 246-1499

Newsletter

Editor - Joanne Kennedy
Associate Editor/Circulation -
Frank Cordaro

Helen Tichy to Receive First Bishop Dingman Peace Award



On February 23rd Helen Tichy will be the first recipient of the Bishop Maurice J. Dingman Peace Award. This award has been instituted by Catholic Peace Ministry to honor a church and civic leader whose struggle includes social justice, women's issues, ecumenism, rural advocacy and world peace. This year's keynote address at the award dinner will be given by Bishop Thomas Gumbleton, a leading voice in the worldwide peace and justice movement and pastor of St. Leo's Parish in Detroit's inner city.

Tickets are still available through Catholic Peace Ministry. Suggested donation price is \$25.00. Contact Bob Notman-Cook at (515) 255-8114, 4211 Grand Ave, Des Moines, IA 50312.

by Shirley Crisler

Every now and then, 84-year old Helen Tichy tells herself she is through with being a peace and justice activist. "But then I read something or hear something and I'm up again. I love people," says Tichy who will be honored this February by Catholic Peace Ministry as the first recipient of the Bishop Maurice J. Dingman Award for Peace.

Inspired by Dorothy Day, Tichy, a retired elementary educator who was born in Omaha and raised on an acreage in Ringgold County, began her activist work twenty years ago when she became the first and (according to Frank Cordaro) the best supporter of what was then the newly-forming Des Moines Catholic Worker House. She often took house coverage for the staff and a few years later, at the age of 71, Tichy traveled to New York City to take part in her first peace march against nuclear arms proliferation.

Since then she has volunteered her time and energy with the Catholic Worker House, Catholic Peace Ministry, and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. She has wit-

nessed for peace in line crossings at both the headquarters for the Strategic Air Command, located at Offutt Air Force Base outside of Omaha, and at the nuclear test site in the Nevada desert where she was arrested, fingerprinted and photographed.

Disturbed by stories about American military aid in Central America in the 1970s and 1980s, Tichy decided to travel to the region to see things first hand. In April 1984, she accompanied a group from Des Moines bringing supplies to refugees living in resettlement camps in Jalapa, Nicaragua near the Honduras border.

According to Tichy, "The contras were planning an attack on Nicaragua from Honduras, but didn't carry it out because we were there. They didn't want to injure an American. After all, the U.S. was funding the contras so it would be bad news if Helen Tichy was killed. They didn't care about me, but if something happened to an American, the people in the United States might question what was going on."

After returning to Iowa, Tichy witnessed her stories of the human suffering she had seen in the war zone with church groups and at school. She

also was arrested when she participated in a demonstration held in Charles Grassley's office to protest Congress' plan to give an additional \$100 million to the contras.

Following her trip to Nicaragua, Tichy joined Women for Guatemala, an organization which helps poor women left destitute by the war. In 1989 she spent two weeks with the Mayan Indians in San Luca, Guatemala, and, again in 1993, she traveled with a church group to El Salvador to bring medical and school supplies to the needy, as well as to bring back to Iowa her personal witness of human suffering in Central America.

Today, Tichy is an active member of the Drake Newman Community where she helps to bring meals each month to the needy. She continues her involvement with the Catholic Worker House, and is frequently seen at meetings, and at peace and justice demonstrations.

Sister Shirley Crisler, SFCC is co-author of *In the Midst of His People: The authorized biography of Bishop Maurice J. Dingman* published by Rudi Publishing, Iowa City (1995).

Community News

by Joanne Kennedy

We had a couple special guests late in December. Andrea, a former community member, came to visit all the way from Germany. To add to the excitement, Jessica also came to Des Moines from North Carolina and the whole gang was practically here. Carla especially enjoyed their visit, but really, we all did. Four Swedes stopped by for a night on their way to the Feast of the Holy Innocents action at StratCom. They were wonderful guests and are welcome back anytime. Special thanks to Kevin and Bobby for the use of their apartment for hospitality. Norman came back from his vacation and we all agreed that he should take a sabbatical from house work. He still lives with us and watches out for things at Lazarus House while we work on it. He rang the

bells for the Salvation Army again this winter and continues to carve with his spare time.

Carla has been working full time, experiencing all the joys and pains that come with that. She took a night class in the fall but has decided not to take a class this spring.

Her boys are wonderful, as ever. Jordan continues to excel in pre-kindergarten, he enjoys being sent to the kindergarten class in the afternoons. Joshua is a star pupil in first grade and was as precocious as ever when he had to get two staples in his head to repair an injury sustained while jumping from one chair to another. Julius seems to enjoy junior high, although he doesn't complain when there are "snow days", and he hopes to play basketball next year.

Ed had a rough end to '96. His father died just after Christmas. Luckily, weather permitted and he

was able to ride down to Georgia for the funeral. He spent a few days with his family down there. We were blessed with the help of our friends during this time.

Kelvin, who has been staying with us for several months now, has been an invaluable help. He puts up with all our bossiness and does everything from answering the phone to shoveling snow. We are grateful for him and his humor.

Mike McHugh, who lived with us for the past two years moved on to pursue a teaching career in Korea. We all wish him much peace and happiness. Perhaps he'll write to let us know how things are going.

I am well. I was especially glad for a chance to go on a quick vacation. Carla and I spent five wonderful days in New York

City. I'm not convinced that she experienced nirvana quite like I did, but we managed to meet up with Andrea and Jessica there, so she was happy.

My good friend, Tina, from Los Angeles, met us there and spent the whole five days with us. It was great to see her. Susan and Mary from the Philadelphia Catholic Worker also came up to visit us in New York for one evening.

Of course we also visited with Carmen Trotta, a former Des Moines Catholic Worker, who showed us a great time around town. And we had dinner with Carrie Fisher, also a former Iowan.

We received splendid hospitality from the Catholic Worker there, as they tolerated our little slumber party which kept growing. We are eager to return the favor, if they can brave Iowa.

Nevertheless, we have been working very hard. Dingman House is always full to capacity as the number of families needing help continues to climb and foot traffic from the

neighborhood is at an all time high. Especially during the cold weather we have folks come in to warm up. We can't keep enough coffee made or toilet paper stocked.

Also, thanks to our generous readers we have been moving along at Lazarus House. An especially generous soul made it possible for us to hire a construction crew who did some great work upstairs. Now we have been refinishing floors and painting whenever we get a spare moment to keep things going. We still need to get the kitchen sink and cabinets worked on and finalize a furnace installation. All these things in good time.

Lastly, I need to thank everyone that continues to support us. It is truly magic that we exist solely on your kindness. God is with us, although we are tempted to lose faith when our heat bill is sky high and we have to buy new tires for the truck. Still, we know that we all will muddle through, with your help and God's grace.



Norman's Whereabouts

by Norman Searab

Hello! I'm writing from what feels like the coldest bedroom in Lazarus House. In fact, it's the same room I moved into when I first became a Des Moines Catholic Worker. In the last fifteen years I've seen a constant flow of changes in guests, houses and community.

Mostly though, I've seen changes in myself. The last few months, I've been going through some big changes. Since I got back from my two month visit back east, I have not taken on any of the regular hospitality and community responsibilities here at the Catholic Worker. I don't take any shifts at Dingman House nor do I attend community meetings. Right now, the Catholic Worker is giving me hospitality. This is due to the fact that I am burned out. I guess the

last fifteen years have been rough on me.

I'm working on my health and I hope to find a job. I'd like to make enough money so I can buy and maintain my own car. Eventually, I want to drive all over the country checking out different Catholic Worker farms in hopes of living on one some day.

I'm still working on my wood carvings. Right now, I'm working on a gift for Kay Meyer. Then, I want to make something for the Bishop and Joanne. I also want to make a new sign for the Catholic Worker House. The old sign was falling off, so it was taken down. That sign has been hanging on the house longer than I've been in the community!

A few weeks ago I had a chance to meet some of Ed Bloomer's family. Ed's father died and I got to help drive him to Louisville for his father's funeral. I was happy I was free to help

Eddie in this way.

One of the things I feel I can do right now is risk going to jail for protesting nuclear weapons. I was one of the ten line crossers at StratCom Headquarters at Offutt, Air Force Base on the Feast of the Holy Innocents this year. A lot of people made the retreat this year, including our Catholic Worker Archivist, Phil Runkel from Milwaukee.

At first, I thought I would be going to jail because I thought I was breaking my last "ban & bar" letter from Offutt. But, I asked Phil to send me a copy of my last letter. (I send Phil as much stuff as I can for the archives. He does a real good job and he can help you remember things you thought you forgot.) When I got a copy of the letter I found out that I wasn't violating my "ban and bar" letter after all. But I went ahead and pre-

pared a statement to the judge anyway. Here is what I wrote:

I stand here before you, Judge, for my actions as I would some day, stand before God for my deeds on earth, this I believe. Over fifty years ago this country, along with many other countries, fought in a war. It wasn't a small war or a civil war, but a World War. In order to put an end to this world war two new kinds of bombs were dropped. They weren't ordinary bombs. They were atomic bombs. I realize, that had the Germans and Japanese discovered the atomic bomb first, they, too, would have used it and won the war, and lots of us today wouldn't be here because our parents would have died in that war. Since I was born five years after World War II, after the bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, I have no claim nor right to judge the past. I wasn't there. The reason why I crossed the line at Offutt is because we have too many nuclear bombs and weapons, and we are passing them on to a generation

which sees very little hope and has few good dreams for the future. I see how easy it is for a child to get hand guns. Its practically that easy for a country to get a nuclear bomb. Judge, there is another reason for me crossing, it is a selfish reason. The reason is, I'm dying. I don't have cancer or any disease that kills. I have high blood pressure, I'm over weight, I have nothing much to look forward to and I get depressed a lot. When I see a lot of hurt, I wish that I was rich so I could help a little. Yet, I realize that I am poor and have a small voice. If I was to die then I wish to die of natural causes or old age and I wish the same for others. Nobody should have to die from a nuclear bomb. By the time I die, I would like to see a peaceful and nuclear free world for all people.

That is the statement I prepared and since I'm planning on crossing the line again soon, I will save it until I need it. Thank you for your time and your prayers.

It Stinks to High Heaven

by Betsy Keenan

Loud rumblings from the countryside have reached the cities. Rural residents are not pleased with being unwilling neighbors to rapidly proliferating "Hog Factories." These facilities house thousands of animals and provisions for waste disposal are rudimentary. People living nearby have been restricted in seeking redress for damages caused by the stench of the hog waste.

This is not just an issue for the effected rural dweller. This issue is directly connected to the food we eat and the economic system that brings it to our tables.

Farm operation in the United States has grown in size throughout this century. The adoption of labor saving devices of ever increasing size, complexity and cost have enabled and required farmers to get big, cultivating larger areas and raising more livestock. At the same time, rural populations have dwindled, leaving smaller families and less hired help. Yet, despite the increased cost of farm "inputs" (ie: seed, fertilizers, fuel and equipment) the typical Iowa family farm, with its independent, self-managed, hands-on, owner operator technique continues to be the most efficient food producer and often operates with an eye toward sustainability for future generations.

Compared to an Iowa family farm operation, the big corporate hog factories are neither efficient nor socially responsible. The current hog factories in Iowa are a good case in point.

Big investors have rapidly moved into the hog production industry and are radically changing the whole industry, not for the better. For example, Smithfield Foods, Inc. opened a North Carolina Hog Processing plant in Oct. '92 designed to 'handle' 32,000 hogs a day. Today, together with its two plants in Virginia, Smithfield could supply 13 % of the total US capacity

for processing hogs. A large market share for a few, very large operators means more control over supply and price by fewer and fewer people.

Vertical integration is another adverse development in agriculture. Campbell's Soup Company now controls its chicken production from the egg to the soup can. If Campbells' bottom line is profit what priority will the local ecological, economic and social effects of their production system get? Our experience in Iowa have taught us that such local concerns are often ignored or given distant, secondary consideration.

Research monies and new technologies also favor the larger corporate operator. New developments in patented improved genetics, as for leaner hogs, favor large scale operations. Large numbers of uniform animals for slaughter bring premium prices as they are extremely compatible with the mechanized process. This sets up a two tier pricing system in which the large hog factories consistently get a better price for their hogs than the smaller hog producers.

It is important to label these huge production facilities as hog factories or mega-hog factories in spite of their corporate farm titles such as, "Iowa Select Farms" or "Premium Standard Farms." It conjures up false images of a family farm operation. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The "Hog Lots" for these huge hog factory facilities are also misleading. The hogs are raised in large, cement-floored, factory style, metal buildings with artificial lights and huge cesspools for basements. Workers must shower and change garments to tend non-mechanized functions or investigate problems in these quarantined areas.

Manure is one small, but pungent, example of the contrast between hog factories and family farms. On a diversified family farm pig manure can be managed as an asset, part of a sustainable system returning nutrients to the

soil. It stinks, yes, but if mixed with straw, shredded paper or other bedding the odor is less offensive. Smaller quantities make it a smaller problem.

The manure from hog factories is in such concentrated quantities that the odor problem is a major community issue. Often applied to surrounding lands by spray-gun, aerially, like water sprayed to irrigated fields, the odor can be windblown for miles. Where no program of working manure into the soil is required the danger is great for run-off and contaminations of both streams and ground

water.

There is also the danger of accidental spills. This is what has made big headlines and alerted urban dwellers to the problem, exposing most clearly the lies and/or ignorance of the builders and managers of these facilities. Not far from us, in Missouri, at Continental Grain's "Site No. 13" (no window dressing about 'farms' there!) a spill caused by a faulty pipe joint poisoned the Middle Fork of the Grand River. There are estimates that a dozen miles of the river were completely dead. A Sierra Club spokesperson in the Oct.

21, 1995 Kansas City Star stated: "Even when thousands of gallons of hog feces and urine were flowing down the streams and rivers of north Missouri... the officials still insisted that such industrial strength agriculture posed no threat to the environment." These great concentrated quantities of pig manure at hog factories are toxic waste and should be regulated as such!

Americans are sometimes described as having an 'sentimental attachment' to the idea of family farms. I think that is an accurate assessment of an attitude that admires the

Hog Factory Fact Sheet

- Hog factory buildings typically house anywhere from 3,000 to 12,000 hogs at one site.
- Predictions by "industry experts" indicate that 10 large scale hog factories will produce 30% of the U.S. hogs by the year 2000.
- Between 1989-94 Iowa's Department of Natural Resources issued 452 construction permits for large-scale livestock facilities. 95% were for hog factories, and 25% of these facilities were built by three large corporate agri-businesses: Iowa Select, Swine Graphics and A.J. Decoster.
- Recent University studies indicate that family farmers create three times as many jobs, make 80% of their business purchases locally, provide more permanent jobs, increase local retail sales and generate higher per capita income.
- Whereas, corporate hog factories make less than 50% of their purchases locally, produce higher unemployment rates, reduce income per capita, contribute to population decline and diminish community services in their areas.
- Last July, a 1.5 million gallon hog manure spill in Iowa killed 10,000 fish. Two other spills occurred last July also, with more than 15,000 more gallons of hog manure in Iowa's creeks and rivers and another 1,300 dead fish.
- Residents living near hog factories report that the smell is so strong that it burns the throat and nose, they see maggot infested hog carcasses floating down the river and hog body parts strewn on the road.
- Hog factories rely heavily on the widespread use of antibiotics and other drugs on the hogs. This could result in the development of antibiotic-resistant bacteria which are transferable to humans. Workers at meat processing plants have the same bacteria as those found in the hogs.
- Sulfamethazine is another drug used by hog factories as a growth stimulant to control disease. It is used by approximately 70% of large hog factories and it is carcinogenic.

- information graciously provided by Iowa's Citizens for Community Improvement

strong dedication to meaningful work and family cooperation that the ideal family farm exemplifies. At the same time this sentimental 'average' American wants cheap, tasty food that requires little or no effort to prepare. Your average consuming American is oblivious to the nutritional, economic or environmental impact that results.

There is a certain nostalgia involved, perhaps influenced by happy memories of visit to a relative's farm or literature or television. This omits the unremitting hard work, financial precarity and social isolation responsible for many people's exodus from farm to town. The Heartland Catholic Bishops' statement of 1980, "Strangers and Guest," outlines clear, unsentimental, well-based theological support for family farms stating, "All people urban and rural, must recognize that their lifestyles, purchasing habits and expectations contribute directly and indirectly to the concentration of land ownership and the consequent abuse of the land. We are called by God to change our consumption patterns and to act to effect justice in the land." (Strangers & Guest #104)

The system of small to medium sized, independent family farms supplied food in abundance for the United States for generations.

It is ironic that with the deterioration of the food production system in Russia we are sending farmer-ambassadors and consultants to advise people there following the break-up of collective farms. While, at home, our production structure is becoming more and more concentrated and vulnerable, as technocrat planners who are out of touch with the realities of the work place and have little personal investment, just put in their hours and draw a pay check.

In our local Bible study group we have come to see these hog factories as economically unjust and unacceptable by scriptural standards. We find the basis for our critique in the Hebrew Scriptures, as did the Heartland Bishops. In these scriptures we find a vision of God's people as stewards on the land, not just blessed, but called to be responsible.

God let the Hebrew people know they were saved, not just spiritually saved, but rescued out of exile, slavery and oppression into a just and compassionate social order. At the end of the road to freedom was land, good land, for them but there were conditions. The scriptures are clear. The Hebrew people are told to remember God made it all, land and people. God tells them to take care of each other, to take care of the land, to

welcome strangers and to never be greedy.

These hog factories clearly do not measure up to scriptural, moral guidelines. They hurt the land and the people by disrupting communities socially, economically and environmentally. Local people have less and less input and control over the quality of their own lives. These hog factories are the result of greed and a few individuals will profit greatly while others suffer.

Bigger isn't always better. Seeking an appropriate scale for manufacturing, farming and economic activities is a major factor in economic justice. People should have a say about what effects their lives, homes, jobs and food supply. Still, the trend is toward bigger and bigger conglomerates of banks and other multi-national corporations which escape regulations on labor and environmental standards. Vertically integrated food manufacturing puts the control and destiny of the human food supply in the hands of fewer and fewer people.

Nonviolent Direct Action At Hog Factory



photo courtesy of the *Creston News Advertiser*

Working from the Christian charter in the Beatitudes and from sorrow over the abuse of the land activists prayed and acted for justice in Maloy on November 27, 1995, blocking the driveway of Iowa Select "Farms" which will be a factory housing 7,200 hogs when the present expansion is finished.

Twenty people gathered in the inclement weather to stack bales of hay in one driveway and six people risked arrest by locking the other gate shut and blocking the driveway with their bodies. Pictured above from left are Lenore Yarger, Betsy Keenan, Diane Keyes, Frank Cordaro, Tom Coenen and Michael Sprong. The activists declared Iowa Select Hog Factory in Maloy closed. There were no arrests, the sheriff remained in his car avoiding the nasty weather and indicated that there would be no arrests unless there was property damage.

After the action, Iowa Select officials indicated that they would be willing to meet with local residents, which they hadn't done previously. However, they have made no effort to contact the organizers of the protest, nor have they responded to various letters from activists.

This is the tide we swim against in our personal decision making and interactions. We are called to resist this tide. Resist by buying direct from farmers, gardeners and crafters. Buy locally. If farmers could sell produce to you directly at supermarket prices there would be more small farms. Boycott corporations who violate human rights and global life. Buy and encourage others to buy where you see sustainable, locally controlled production of healthy food.

Quoting again from "Strangers and Guests", we must "...work for a better future through prayers, preaching the Good News of God's loving care for all people... and through public witness." Public witness is described as both the good example of stewardship and social action, which includes bringing our concerns to legislative bodies who, when they mediate among conflicting claims, "must be especially concerned about safeguarding the rights of those with the least economic and political power."

This is a critical moment in the Anti-hog factory movement in Iowa. People all over the state, especially in poorer areas where land values are lower, face the consequences of these hog concentration camps (a phrase coined by James Flansberg).

The next few months will make or break the small family hog producer. If we don't get any relief from our legislators, the corporate takeover of hog production in this state will be complete and the dreadful consequences will expand. Take some thought on the issue. Talk about it with others and do what is in your power to turn back this tide that threatens rural dwellers, family farmers and all of us.

Betsy Keenan lives at the Strangers & Guests Catholic Worker in Maloy, IA, less than a quarter mile from the site of an Iowa Select hog factory, which was converted from a family farm this past fall.





To Pay Is To Die: We Want To Live!



by Mano Barreno

Ecuador is a country very rich in natural resources, but they are very badly distributed. A tiny minority of the population has gotten rich from the exploitation of the resources, causing poverty for the majority. This minority group continues to control the political power of the country.

Geographically, Ecuador is located in South America, in the middle of the world, on the equator. The country is divided into three natural regions: one, a tropical climate located on the shores of the Pacific ocean; another, a temperate zone located between the two mountain chains of the Andes, with an average altitude of 9,000 feet above sea level; and the third, a humid tropical climate to the east of the Andes, by the head waters of the Amazon river.

The Ecuadorian population has a rural majority, but the arid able land has a concentrated ownership. Four percent of the population owns fifty-four percent of the land. The small farmers of the inter-Andean region own tiny parcels of land, measuring an average of no more than three hectares.

The current land problems started about twenty years ago, when many small farmers, from all parts of the country, began taking out loans from the National Bank of Foment (BNF), a state bank.

An Andean farmer told us, "Attracted by the ease that the BNF offered, including the low interest rates at the time, we all fell in the trap. For us, indebtedness with the BNF was just the beginning of much misfortune."

In the years that followed, due to the exaggerated rise in interest rates by the BNF, the continual drop in the price of farm products, the increase in cost of seeds, fertilizer and agricultural tools, plagues, drought, and frost damage to crops (which has been aggravated by the poisoning of the land and atmosphere), the land based poor in Ecuador have be-

come increasingly poorer and less land based.

One woman told us that even if a small farmer has enough money to plant and harvest crops, they "do not receive enough money to survive, much less to pay the debt owed to the BNF." Because of this, many are forced to sell everything, their animals, tools and even their land.

"Our cross to bear," these women farmers tell us, "is that we have even been forced to take our children out of school and put them to work in the fields, as hired hands, to pay the debt without having enough food to feed them well or money to cure them when they are sick."

According to a poll taken of 100 small family farmers indebted to the BNF, 29 families sold their land to pay part of their debt, 50 families sold their animals and 13 families sold their farm tools. But not even then are they free of debt.

Left without land, animals, tools or any means of survival, they are still obligated to pay a large part of their debt to the BNF. This debt, with its extremely high interest rates, grows every day. Many farmers complain, "In addition to leaving us in total poverty, without money to even pay for milk for our children, the BNF people frighten us with threats that if we don't pay, they will take our land."

Two years ago, faced with the impossibility of paying the BNF loans off and afraid that the small amount of land they still had would be taken, a group of Andean farmers began to meet with each other to see what could be done in this desperate situation.

This small group, through conversations, meetings and research into the history of the debtors with the BNF has grown in numbers. More importantly, their consciousness of the value and dignity of their lives, which is greater than any debt, no matter how large, has grown. Life comes first and this is so sacred that

one has to defend it. "We will defend to the last inch, our lands that are our lives and the lives of our children, even with our own lives," the farmers affirm.

This affirmation is now a firm conviction among the small number of farmers whom I am helping to organize with the Association of Small Farmers - Defenders of our Land. Our objective is to organize in order to defend their lands and all their rights. The Association represents 65 families, from 16 farming communities in the canton of Quero, in the province of Tugurahua. Their statutes are now in the judicial process of legalization and we should be a legally registered organization soon.

In addition to the defense of their lands, the Association is also looking for solutions to the most urgent needs of its members.

Through the initiatives

and measures of the Association, a special high school was started this year in the countryside. It already has more than 40 students from the seventh through tenth grades, children, teenagers and adults, all farmers.

Also, the Association has created a savings and credit cooperative, providing their own economic resources to fund some of their needs. We already have 2 million sucres in capital (about \$740), which is growing every month through interest and monthly membership fees.

It is a small alternative to the BNF, but, like a plant that is growing, we hope it will grow to give more and more small farmers an alternative to borrowing from the BNF.

Still, the most important thing is that the members of the Association are happy with their organization. With a healthy pride,

one of the Association members proclaims, "To be with the Association is like being without debt. With the high interest rate charged by the BNF, we often paid more in interest than the original capital that we borrowed. Now, we are secure in being organized, nobody can charge us what we've already paid, nor take our land while we still have breath of life. To pay is to die, we want to live!"

Mano Barreno, a native Ecuadorian, is a former community member of the Dubuque Catholic Worker. He now lives in Ecuador and is deeply involved with his work with the farmers. This is very dangerous politically, but he carries on, teaching bible courses and organizing the disfranchised. If you wish support him contact:

Manolo Barreno
Casilla 366

Riobamba, Ecuador.
Phone number: 900-288

Please join us to celebrate
twenty amazing years
of the
Des Moines Catholic Worker!
Friday, August 23 - Sunday, August 25



We are planning several fun events like:
- a conversation with Phil Berrigan and Liz McAllister
- a hootenanny with Relative Minor, the Catholic Worker Band from Luck, WI

resistance notes

Lakes and Prairie Life Community of Omaha News



photo by Jo Peterson

Feast of the Holy Innocents Retreat, Witness and Line Crossing

From the evening of December 26 until the afternoon of December 28, approximately 40 people gathered for the 16th annual "Feast of the Holy Innocents" Retreat, Witness and Line Crossing hosted in Omaha at the University of Nebraska Religious Center.

Joyce Glen conducted a nonviolent training workshop on Wednesday morning. That afternoon, the participants drove out to the Offutt Air Force Base main gate for a prayer service and a sizing up of the area. That evening Frank Cordaro lead a biblical reflection on the infant narrative in the Gospel of Matthew and Sam Day led a discussion on the meaning and purposes of nonviolent direct action and why keep crossing the line at Offutt AFB.

Thursday morning began with a combination Quaker service and Catholic liturgy which concluded at the main gate of Offutt AFB where 10 people crossed the line and 25 others witnessed in support of their nonviolent direct action. It was a wonderful retreat and one of the best attended actions in recent years.

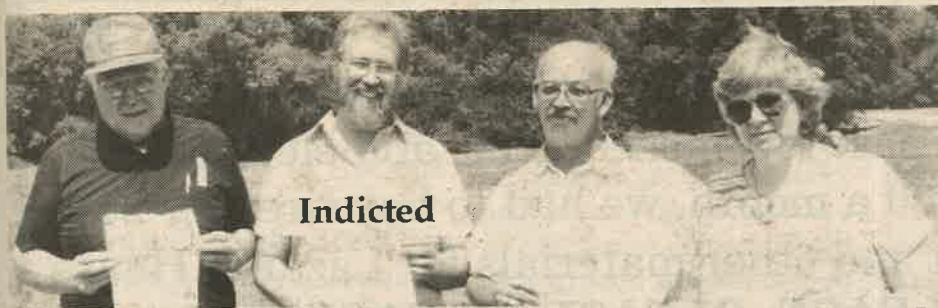


photo by Jo Peterson

Mark Kenney Sentenced to Six Months

In an apparent act of selective prosecution, the Omaha Federal District Attorney and Offutt Air Force Base Security sent Mark Kenney notice to appear in Federal Magistrates Court in Omaha NE. Nov. 20th to answer to charges of breaking his Ban & Bar Letter.

Mark was one of four people who crossed the line at Offutt on August 6th of this year. Fr. Jack McCaslin, another repeat offender, also crossed the line at Offutt on the 6th. Both violated active Ban & Bar letters, but so far only Mark has been prosecuted.

Mark plead "no contest" on November 20th and received a six month sentence the same day. He is currently at the Federal Prison Camp in Yankton SD. Prayers, letters of support and financial assistance are urged. Write:

Mark Kenney #14018-047FPC - Kingsbury / P.O. Box 700 - Yankton SD 57078

Radical Street Theater Player Visiting Omaha

Mary Sprunger-Froese will be my guest for the week of March 18th to attend the "Theology of the Oppressed" conference at UNO. Mary is a member of the "First Strike Players" from Colorado Springs. Her theater troupe challenges such sacred cows as militarism and nuclearism with the hope to challenge mind sets, structures and systems. I'm looking forward to Mary's visit and learning more about Street Theater and its possible use in Omaha and at StratCom. Anyone interested in either the conference or in speaking to Mary about her work, are welcome to contact me, Jo Peterson, at (402) 556-9057.

Memorial Day Witness at StratCom

APLC - Omaha is planning our 3rd Annual Memorial Day Witness at StratCom. Please to clear this date on your resistance calendar and be with us on May 27th. Anyone interested please contact: Jo Peterson, 4924 Chicago St., Omaha NE 68132 / (402) 556-9057.

Stop Project Elf News

Seventy-five people gathered to commemorate Martin Luther King Jr's birthday at the Elf site in Clam Lake, WI. Sixteen people were arrested for trespass when they crossed the line. John LaForge, a consistent Elf resister, was released early in January after serving an eight month sentence for repeated trespass. Ron Renkoski recently turned himself in to serve what will possibly be a two month sentence for repeated trespass at the Elf site.

Stop Project Elf is planning their annual Mother's Day action for May 10-12. For more information or to write letters of support contact: Anathoth Community Farm, 740 Round Lake Rd., Luck, WI 54853. Phone # (715) 472-8721.

Friends in Jail

Remember to write to Carl Kabat, serving a five year sentence for the 1994 "Good Friday/April Fools Plowshares" direct disarmament at a North Dakota nuclear missile silo. His address:

Fr. Carl Kabat, OMI #16888
ND State Penitentiary
Box 5521
Bismarck, ND 58502.

An Unofficial Ash Wednesday Prayer Service

"A Prayer for Dialogue In Our Church"

Wednesday, February 21st, 1996
10:30 a.m.



St. Ambrose Cathedral
6th & High St. Des Moines, IA
on the front steps

Fr. Frank Cordaro and Fr. Kevin Cameron welcome interested people to join them on Thursday, February 15th at 7:30 p.m. at 1301 Boyd St., Des Moines, to plan an Ash Wednesday Prayer Service. We wish to join our voices with the National Call To Action "Project Ash Wednesday" in asking for a national dialogue on the future of priestly ministry. For more info call: Fr. Frank (515) 534-4691 or Fr. Kevin (515) 264-9540.

A Commemoration of the 16th Anniversary of the Martyrdom of Archbishop Oscar Romero



Sunday March 24, 6:30 p.m.
St. Ambrose Cathedral
6th & High Sts., Des Moines

There will be a visiting speaker
from El Salvador.

A Catholic Peace Ministry Event
For more info. call: (515) 255-8114

\$\$

\$\$

We are asking especially for money this issue because we have had several large expenses these past few months. Gas and electric bills for all three houses exceed \$900 a month, we had to buy tires for both vehicles, we need to buy paint and other materials for Lazarus House and taxes are coming. So, **PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE** send us a little money if you can, and, of'course, anything else you send over is always greatly appreciated.

\$\$

\$\$

via pacis

Des Moines Catholic Worker

P.O. Box 4551

Des Moines, IA 50306

Address Correction Requested

**BULK RATE
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
DES MOINES, IA
PERMIT
NO.4171**

Please, send us your change of address before the post office does and save us 35 cents